

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1.-33. (Canceled)

34. (New) A method for processing graphic information present on mailpieces, whereby the graphic information on mailpieces is acquired, evaluated, and stored, and whereby the acquired graphic information is used for physically sorting the mailpieces, the method comprising:

evaluating the stored graphic information of a first mailpiece as a Virtual Fine Sorting (virtual FS) according to one or more sorting features to obtain a first result comprising sorting features and storing the first result of the evaluation of the first mailpiece in a database, which comprises a positive file, a negative file, and sorting information,

augmenting the database with additional sorting features based on the first result and augmenting the negative file as a function of the sorting feature,

specifying a reference code for the first mailpiece from the first result, where the reference code is a function of the sorting features,

sorting the first mailpiece as a function of the reference code according to the sorting features, and

triggering a physical sorting of a second mailpiece based on the graphical information of the first mailpiece and the additional sorting features of the augmented database.

35. (New) The method according to claim 34, wherein

the evaluating comprises determining if postage indicia are present on the mailpieces.

36. (New) The method according to claim 34, wherein

evaluating the graphic information takes place via a data line at a different point in time and/or at a different place than the point in time and/or the place of the physical sorting of the first mailpiece based on the reference code.

37. (New) The method according to claim 34, wherein

evaluating the graphic information comprises statistical evaluating the graphic information.

38. (New) The method according to claim 34, comprising

verifying the authenticity of sender franking by comparing the graphic information present on the mailpieces to the graphic information expected for a particular mailpiece, whereby expected graphic information corresponds to a determination that preceded the comparison, and registering a postage indicium as being forged if the graphic information present differs from the expected graphic information.

39. (New) The method according to claim 34, comprising

verifying the authenticity of a digital postage indicium by deciphering the encoded digital information contained in the graphic information and comparing the encoded digital information to unencrypted graphic information present on the appertaining mailpiece to determine whether the encoded digital information matches the unencrypted graphic information and, if the encoded digital information does not match the unencrypted graphic information, registering the postage indicium as being forged.

40. (New) The method according to claim 39, comprising

generating a first hash value from data contained in the graphic information in order to check whether the first hash value matches a second hash value contained in the encoded information and, if first hash value does not match the second hash value, registering the postage indicium as being forged.

41. (New) The method according to claim 40, comprising

forming the first hash value taking into account information about mailpiece data, taking into account a temporarily stored random number and taking into account a loading procedure identification number.

42. (New) The method according to claim 34, wherein

a time of day of a sorting event is a sorting feature.

43. (New) The method according to claim 34, wherein

a date of a sorting event is a sorting feature.

44. (New) The method according to claim 34, wherein

a starting time and/or the ending time of a sorting event is a sorting feature.

45. (New) The method according to claim 34,

a specification of production machines in a mail or freight distribution center is a sorting feature.

46. (New) The method according to claim 34, wherein
a value of the insufficient postage determined by means of the evaluation is a
sorting feature.

47. (New) The method according to claim 34, wherein
a Sender Franking Machine (SFM) identification determined by means of the
evaluation is a sorting feature.

48. (New) The method according to claim 47, wherein
the SFM identification is readable is a sorting feature.

49. (New) The method according to claim 47, comprising
checking whether the determined SFM identification is present in the negative
file.

50. (New) The method according to claim 47, wherein
checking whether the determined SFM identification is present in the positive
file.

51. (New) The method according to claim 47, comprising
checking whether the SFM has insufficient postage.

52. (New) The method according to claim 47, comprising
checking whether SFM currency is readable.

53. (New) The method according to claim 47, comprising checking whether SFM postage indicium is readable.

54. (New) The method according to claim 34, comprising checking a date of a Personal Computer Franking ("PCF date") as a sorting feature.

55. (New) The method according to claim 34, comprising checking whether a Personal Computer Franking version ("PCF version") is present as a sorting feature.

56. (New) The method according to claim 34, comprising checking whether Personal Computer Franking insufficient postage ("PCF insufficient postage") is present as a sorting feature.

57. (New) The method according to claim 34, comprising checking whether a determined Personal Computer Franking is present in a negative file ("PCF in negative file") as a sorting feature.

58. (New) The method according to claim 34, comprising storing data from automated checking of the postage.

59. (New) The method according to claim 34, comprising storing results of the evaluation of graphic information in a database.

60. (New) The method according to claim 34, comprising printing the reference code onto the mailpieces.

61. (New) The method according to claim 34, comprising imaging surface video data and/or a statistical evaluation on the basis of the graphic information to determine a second result of the evaluation serving to augment the database.

62. (New) A device for processing graphic information present on the surfaces of mailpieces comprising:

an image processing unit, whereby the image processing unit has (a) a device for acquiring, evaluating, and storing the graphic information, and (b) at least one device for recognizing different types of postage of the mailpieces, whereby the image processing unit and the device for recognizing the types of postage are in a data network,

wherein the data network is connected to at least one device for performing a physical sorting of mailpieces, at least one device for generating a reference code as a function of sorting features, and at least one device for evaluating the graphic information, so that at least one device for evaluating the graphic information of a first mailpiece ascertains a first result of the evaluation comprising sorting features to physically sort the mailpieces according to the sorting features, wherein the data network is also connected to a database that is augmented by a sorting feature on the basis of the first result of the evaluation of the graphic information, and wherein the physical sorting of the first mailpiece is carried out on the basis of the reference code according to the sorting features.

63. (New) The device according to claim 62, wherein
the at least one device for evaluating the graphic information of the mailpieces
is located inside and/or outside of a mail distribution center.

64. (New) The device according to claim 62, wherein
the at least one device for evaluating the graphic information of the mailpieces
has at least one input device and at least one display device so that evaluation
results and surface video data of the mailpieces are displayed to a user and edited
by the user employing the input device.

65. (New) The device according to claim 64, wherein
the at least one display device comprises analog and/or digital video
equipment.

66. (New) The device according to claim 64, comprising
PC-based display devices that allow a filtering of the video data and a detailed
depiction of specific segments of the video data.

67. (New) The device according to claim 64, wherein
the at least one input device is selected from the group consisting of PC
keyboards, numerical keypads, barcode scanners, and devices for speech
recognition.